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THE EARLY DAYS

by Nancy H. McMoneagle

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For all the great contributions Robert Monroe has made to thousands of people across the globe, he was always the first to say he wasn’t altruistic. In fact, Bob didn’t believe altruism was possible, and consistently vowed that his work was not for the betterment of humanity. He simply stated that everything he did was solely to satisfy his own curiosity. And though it’s true that Bob did have a vastly curious and brilliant mind, it’s always been my opinion that he “doth protest too much.” Far too many benefited from his work for him not to have cared about helping humanity. But then, who was I to challenge him?

In fact, besides being Bob’s stepdaughter, I was his first full-time program trainer, fan mail answerer, national program coordinator, secretary, driver, and public relations person. I assisted in designing the early programs and in writing the trainer’s manuals, and was also one of the “research team,” which later became known as the Explorers. In short, I wore every hat possible in the early days, and was honored to be a part of building the foundation of what would become known as The Monroe Institute. After working for Bob and the Institute for nearly two decades, I resigned as director in 1991 and started my astrology practice.

It was truly thrilling to work with Bob as he experimented with us family members and then others, attempting to elicit varying states of consciousness. To do this he used different sound combinations, mixing in his rich and resonant voice for guidance. These states ranged from mild relaxation to other non-ordinary, or altered, states of consciousness, including the “time between lifetimes” and the out-of-body state. It was like being an astronaut (or “astronaut,” as we jokingly called it) as we explored realms beyond our usual earthly concerns, far beyond the perceptual confines of space and time.

Bob’s Original Plan (BOP)

Bob actually started looking into the effects of sound some years earlier due to his interest in sleep learning, as well as a desire to learn more about controlling out-of-body experiences. And it was during the '70s that Bob, with the help of a number of individuals, started putting his work together in a form that would, indeed, be the foundation for bringing something of value to a large number of people world wide.

To facilitate his research, Bob built a specially designed lab at Whistlefield, the country home in Virginia where the family then lived. Although he initially called the lab "Whistlefield Research Laboratories," he soon changed it to the Monroe Institute of Applied Sciences, or M.I.A.S. for short—Bob did so love his acronyms! It wasn't until 1985 that M.I.A.S. was called The Monroe Institute, now known as TMI by so many. That was also when it became a nonprofit organization.

Now armed with a lab that included a control room and three shielded rooms or "booths," which were outfitted with audio and with galvanic skin response measuring units, he had the perfect set-up for testing his audio guidance system. In the booths the Explorers would lie down on comfortable beds, listen to and report on the effects of the audio combinations he fed to each person via stereo headsets. Bob used to joke that he was "reeling us out and bringing us back in," with his special sound concoctions. All along, of course, he was recording the correlations between the sound combinations and our experiences.

In addition to family members who participated as Explorers, there was a core group who consistently came to the lab weekly for sessions in the booths. These early supporters and contributors to Bob's work included Bill Yost, Tom Campbell, Dennis Mennerich, John Laurence, Rosie McKnight, and Shay St. John, to name just a few. There were also a number of other dedicated individuals such as Fred "Skip" Atwater, now the Institute's director of research, who gave their Thought, Energy, and Time—or TET (one of Bob's favorite acronyms) to the research effort. In Bob's mind, sharing your TET spoke volumes about your commitment to the work. Several books have been written by some of these early contributors, including Rosalind McKnight's *Cosmic Journeys* and Skip Atwater's *Captain of My Ship, Master of My Soul*. Tom Campbell's *My Big TOE (Theory of Everything)* has just been published.

As Explorers, we had to learn to report verbally, no matter how deep the state or how "far out" we happened to be, so that Bob could determine which sounds correlated with which experiences. At times he would have two or three of us "travel together" to these other, nonphysical realities—sometimes we reported separately (often with amazingly similar details), and sometimes he would open our mikes, allowing us to hear each other's perceptions. I recall those particular sessions being incredibly intimate experiences.

Another way Bob observed what was going on with each Explorer was via the galvanic skin response (GSR) readouts transmitted to the control room from electrodes we put on each time we climbed into the booth. The GSR gave him a feel for any major changes in our physical state of relaxation or tension. Not only was this a valuable guide to how we were doing, it also gave him more data about how we were responding to the particular sounds he was combining and sending to us via the headsets.

When it came to labeling which state we were in, or where we were being focused, Bob felt that using numbers was a clean and simple way to identify the states of consciousness. C-1 stood for “Consciousness Number One,” the state of being fully wide awake and alert. Focus 10 became the state of mind awake, body asleep; Focus 12, the state of expanded awareness; and Focus 15 was the state of no time.

Thanks to information that certain Explorers “brought back” from their experiences, Bob then guided people to even “higher,” or perhaps more accurately stated, deeper and more profound states of awareness. For example, Shay St. John, then Shay Ellsworth, was an Explorer who had a special connection with an intelligence whom she called Miranon. As a result of many sessions with Bob in which Shay communicated with Miranon, a number of ideas evolved that were eventually incorporated into the Institute’s programs—such as the *GATEWAY VOYAGE*® exercise that takes participants through various color patterns and foci to reach Focus 21, the Bridge between physical matter reality and other energy systems.

After much trial and error and a host of Explorer sessions, the distinct sound combinations to reach specific states were determined and implemented, and Bob began making what became known as the Hemi-Sync® taped exercises.

Beginning Expansion of Bob’s Original Plan (BE-BOP)

With word now out about his studies of the effects of sound on consciousness, and because of the burgeoning success of his book, *Journeys Out of the Body*, Bob was invited to conduct a workshop at Esalen Institute in California. And so it was that his very first program was born. Bob and his engineering friend, Bill Yost, conducted the first of the Monroe consciousness training programs in 1973 at Esalen using Bob’s special tapes of verbal and audio guidance. Bob eventually received a patent on the binaural beat audio technology based on the Frequency Following Response (FFR) process. FFR combined with other audio elements then became known as Hemi-Sync, short for hemispheric synchronization of the two halves of the brain.

This first weekend program, called the *M-5000*, offered round-the-clock taped exercises, which guided the participants into various states of consciousness. Each tape was an hour long, and other than bathroom breaks, time out for meals, and brief rest periods, the participants were

“on tape” the entire time. Physical exercise wasn’t a consideration back then. Thankfully, this procedure evolved into a much more balanced approach in years to come.

The *M-5000* participants reported a wide range of extraordinary experiences (with that kind of nonstop tape schedule, I guess so!) and there was great success in rapidly achieving the kind of deeply meditative and altered states of consciousness that yogis or skilled meditators typically took years of practice to achieve. Seeing the powerful effects of his Hemi-Sync tapes when used in a group setting, Bob knew it was time to take this process to the next step. By the mid-’70s, we were offering the *M-5000* weekend and a ten-day program at local motels and retreat centers in Virginia. Soon thereafter we took the “show on the road,” giving the *M-5000* programs across the United States.

The “M” in *M-5000* came from one of Bob’s company names, Mentrionics, and the 5,000 referred to the number of people he hoped to have experience his special audio guidance system. As of now, over 20,000 people have attended Institute programs, and well over a million have listened to the Hemi-Sync tapes and CDs. His books have been translated and published all over the world.

Eventually the *M-5000* name was changed to the more descriptive *GATEWAY VOYAGE*®, for it did indeed provide a gateway into other states of consciousness. And with every passing year the program became more and more popular as people heard about the massive personal breakthroughs program participants were having. A number of other programs have since been added to the curriculum, but in the early days, we had our hands full with the ten-day and weekend *GATEWAYS*. Thankfully, we were very fortunate to have some talented people come on board as program facilitators, including Christopher Lenz, Karen Malik, and Melissa Jager, to name just a few of the “early birds” who were very important to the success and growth of the Institute. This is especially true of Karen Malik, who has stuck with the Institute through thick and thin, and is currently celebrating her twenty-sixth year as a Monroe Institute trainer!

It was fascinating to watch the Institute and its offerings evolve over the decades, and I’m tremendously grateful and proud to have been a part of its development and expansion. Because of the dedication of countless individuals (and tons of TET!), Bob’s work continues to this day. Perhaps the guiding force supporting Bob’s curiosity and his original plan could best be described by a quote from Star Trek: “To boldly go where no man has gone before ...”

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